Eight families left homeless

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"It's too dangerous to go in right now," he said.

A landscaping company is also required to remove two trees, he said.

The fire investigator was in Toronto yesterday to attend the autopsy on Ava, Hiscott said.

"It will probably take us a day or two to determine the cause," Hiscott said.

"Once we get through the debris we'll know what's going on."

Neighbours at the scene that night said a teenage boy named Jordan was babysitting five children in the townhouse while Kristine, the single mother who lives there, was working an overnight shift at Wendy's.

"I can still hear Nancy (Batista) screaming, 'there's kid's up there!'" said Carrie Ann Bonnell who lived in Unit 6 of the townhouse. "It's just devastating."

At the Rock Haven Motel and Conference Centre yesterday, the eight displaced families comforted each other as they watched their children run and play in the hallway.

"The kids don't know what's going on," said Jenn Hayes, who lived in Unit 3 with her partner Todd Hickey. "They think they're on holidays being in a hotel."

Dozens of garbage bags filled with clothes, toys and food delivered by anonymous donors throughout the day lined the hallway in the motel.

Everyone was picking through the piles and taking needed items.

"We lost everything. All our Christmas presents are gone," said Bonnell, who just moved to Peterborough from Newfoundland.

"We don't know where we're going to go tomorrow. We have no insurance.

"We're physically OK, but mentally not so much."

The Peterborough City-County Disaster Trust Fund covers the cost of three night's accommodation and breakfast, said Bob Webb, chairman of the fund.

Webb said the Salvation Army, the Peterborough Housing Resource Centre and the city fire department are now scrambling to try and find shelter for the families without insurance, who had to leave Rock Haven this morning.

"We are working on getting them places to stay," Webb said. "They won't be out in the cold."

There are only three families with insurance, said Hayes, who was packing up her family's belongings to move to the Holiday Inn where she will stay for 14 days.

Although she was happy that her two young children got a good sleep Sunday night, Keitha Watts said she hasn't slept much because all she sees are flames whenever she closed her eyes.

"We all know each other and our kids all play together," Watts said, who was in Unit 7. "Everyone's so upset."

Although the flames ripped through the building's first six units, Stacy Whatman said Units 7 and 8 "didn't lose everything."

"I feel lucky compared to the rest," she said, cradling the family dog Oliver. "Our cat Muffin is still missing."

Although she kept a brave face, her daughter, nine-year-old Meaghan Fredericks, said she is "scared and worried."

A Facebook group called Herbert St Fire was created to collect donations and messages of support for the victims of the fire.

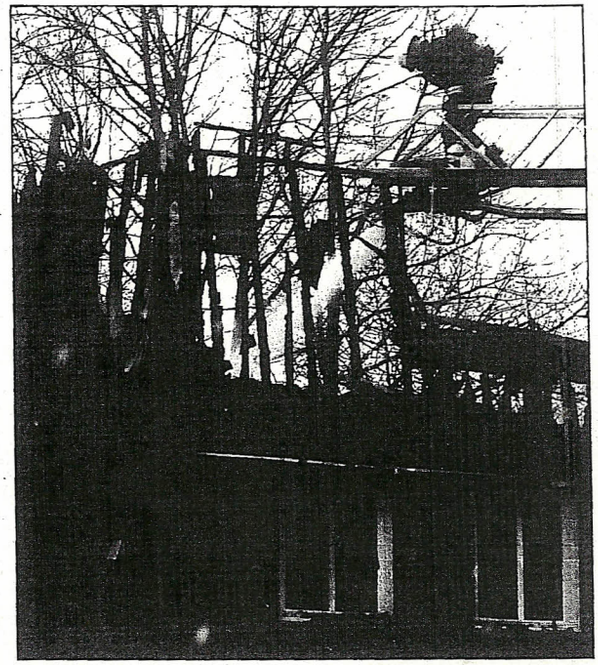
Last night there were about 1,000 members, with many sending messages of shock and disbelief as well as love to Kristine.

Brown, who is an administrator for the page, said she is also in the process of planning a benefit event at the White House to raise money for the families.

NOTE: Fire investigator **Bill Hiscott** said fatal fires are up in Ontario. There have been 102 fatal fires so far this year. The Ontario Fire Marshal's Office tracks fatal fires from Jan. 1 to Dec. 31, he said. Last year at this time there was 94 fatalities, 100 by the end of the year.

— with files from James Neeley

ahouston@peterboroughexaminer.com



Clifford Skarstedt, Examiner

City firefighters work Sunday at the scene of a fatal fire that occurred around 1 a.m. Sunday morning at a townhouse on Herbert Street. A three-year-old girl died in the blaze and another child was taken to hospital. The Ontario Fire Marshal's Office is investigating the blaze.

Community pulls together to help fire victims

By GALEN EAGLE
Examiner Staff Writer

Community support leaders were to meet this morning to decide how best to co-ordinate fundraising efforts for the victims of Sunday's Herbert Street fire that killed a three-year-old girl, hospitalized an 18-month-old boy and left about 40 people homeless.

"Community groups are meeting to discuss how the community of Peterborough can rally around," Salvation Army community service executive director Joanne Minaker said.

The Examiner received many emails and phone calls from the public yesterday asking how they could help the victims.

Fleming College teacher Tony Fragomeli said he was eager to start organizing a campaign.

"I have a young daughter ... I can't imagine what it would be like to lose a young child," he said.

"I have the ability to call a lot of people. I think we can pull together as much as we can."

Glenn Jensen owns Long Island Fish and Chips near the Rock Haven Motel and Convention Centre where the victims are currently staying.

He was eager yesterday to provide the families with free food.

"It happened so near Christmas time," Jensen said. "I just wanted to help them out."

While community groups meet to discuss the victims' needs, Minaker said, the Salvation Army is currently accepting donations of food, clothing and money for the fire victims. The organization can be reached at 742-4391.

A friend of Kristine Thomas, who lost her three-year-old daughter in the fire, has set up a Facebook group called Herbert St Fire to help organize donation collections for the victims.

Jennifer Hunt said she just wanted to help her friend and has been overwhelmed with the support she has already received.

"I have got about 50 calls I have to go pick up (today)," Hunt said.

Hunt can be reached by phone at 768-8070 or by email at starspmoons@live.ca.

A trust fund has been set up for the Thomas family by all three local Wendy's restaurant locations, where Kristine Thomas works.

Wendy's manager Alex Hansen said $600 was raised with more cash flowing throughout the day.

Anyone interested in donating money can go to Kawartha Credit Union on Chemong Road, Hansen said.

— with files from Andrea Houston

Oil sector offers new opportunities

(Continued from Page A1)

The group, with the help of the Greater Peterborough Area Economic Development Corporation (GPAEDC) and Peterborough MP Dean Del Mastro, began networking the country's largest economic

The group attended the Canadian

Edmonton where Rhonda said they

"We understand the opportunities in the oil sector are bigger than any one of us can handle," Rhonda said.

about $26,000 in funding through the (Ontario) Community Futures Program."

The software training will improve Steelworks' capabilities across the board, Don added.

Steelworks expects to invest about $100,000 in upgrades to meet Tarpon's needs, Imming said.

"I expect we should be able to

government funding."

Once the Tarpon contract is in

immediately hire two engineers.

"And with the

said.

The GPAEDC paid for that first booth at the Buyer and Sellers Forum — an investment that is beginning to pay off.

"We wanted to expose area companies to all the needs of the oil sector," said Laura Lauzon, business retention manager for the GPAEDC.

"It's important for our manufacturers to diversify and that diversity ensures we have a stronger future," she said.

Officials with Steelworks and its oilsands consortium partners plan to meet with Tarpon officials early next month to finalize the deal, Rhonda said.

jmedley@peterboroughexaminer.com

Mayor criticizes 'council leaks'

ntinued from Page A1)

recommendation was needed some private-sec- iness skills on the police board."

said the board mem- cluding him, have spent their careers spending public purse.

ke no apologies for want- ring a private business ve to a public board," he ou may not like the rec- ation or agree with it, t question my integrity ing that recommenda-

said the only informa- hared in the closed-door when the item was dis- as that Symons was one nest gentlemen" he had and he supports Pater- ie appointment.

anything I would say ve been in the public e press because unfortu- cannot trust, we cannot ne members of our coun- espect to confidentiality session," the mayor

Bob Hall, in a public committee of the d Symons reap- on the board.

yor said he's been criti- "a concerted effort to Dr. Symons from the vices board. That the es not like Dr. Symons not true at all."

could not be reached ent last night.

n is a former president n & Johnson Peterbor- former Civic Hospital rman.

is the founding presi- rent University and a hairman of Bata Shoe on. He has served on boards such as the luman Rights Commis- National Statistics f Canada and Parc Park Inc.

is a companion of the anada and a member er of Ontario.

ors Henry Clarke, ll Dean Pappas and voted against the nt of Paterson and ncil they support

l be a mistake to not Symons Hall said yet to hear one good y not to reappoint Dr. Hall said pointing to e sector business expe- e is probably Peterbor- ost prominent citizen and internationally."

ice board is a civilian committee. Pappas

essarily need an said.

tto Peeters told council elitism and closed-door

is become much, much about Dr. Symons

is for me," Peeters Hall in their right would ever want to ny board or committee after this?

Knights of Columbus

Lady Liners